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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the International High School (IHS) at LaGuardia Community College (LCC) in New York City was established to address the crisis in retention of high school aged immigrants with low English proficiency. IHS has had great success in improving student attendance, retention, academic achievement, and graduation. Because of its location on the LCC campus, students have access to all college facilities and are surrounded by positive role models. Special features of IHS are: (1) faculty members use English as a Second Language techniques to reinforce English language development in all classes; (2) extended day study opportunities are provided; (3) all graduates are guaranteed admission to LCC; (4) an Integrated Learning Center provides individualized and small group experiential learning opportunities; and (5) all students participate in a mandatory out-of-school internship program. Students must complete the same requirements for graduation as all other New York State students. All full-time faculty are licensed and certified Board of Education personnel, empowered to recruit and interview new applicants for faculty positions, and to participate in curriculum development and peer review and evaluation. IHS has received several awards for its success, and provides a positive model for all college-high school collaboration efforts. (AJL)

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AFTER THREE YEARS

A Status Report on The International High School at LaGuardia Community College

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AFTER THREE YEARS

A Status Report on The International High School at LaGuardia Community College

by Janet E. Lieberman, Eric Nadelstern and Doug Berman

BACKGROUND AND NEED

In the 1980's a number of reports appeared which were severely critical of the results and the methods of American secondary education. In the most widely circulated criticism, A Nation at Risk (1983), the National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded that the nation was in danger of being engulfed by "a rising tide of mediocrity" caused by the overall failure of the nation's secondary schools to provide an adequate education for their students.

The nation's secondary schools, described as being fundamentally successful, were even less effective for the most disadvantaged segments of its student population. In the 1970's, one of the largest migrations in United States history, estimated by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students to be about 6.6 million people and primarily composed of people from Asia, Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean, was in full force. Of the numbers identified, 2.7 million were children, comprising about 6% of the public school enrollment in the United States. During the following decade, this influx of immigrants continued.

In the Coalition report, researchers agreed that nationally,

schools "were doing a poor job of meeting the students' needs." Not only is this conclusion consistent with that reached in A Nation at Risk; it is clear that immigrant students who are linguistically and culturally out of the mainstream of the culture are those in need of the most effective schooling. It is this group which has the most to make up before they can compete on level ground with native speakers.

In New York City, (still one of the most used ports of entry for new immigrants), the problem is particularly acute and the need for a new approach most pressing. In 1988, Robert Wagner, Jr., President of the New York City Board of Education, estimated that more than half of the entering kindergarten class spoke a language other than English as their primary language.

The New York State Board of Regents in an action paper entitled, Increasing Minority Access to the Licensed Professions, stated that "high school dropout rates are significantly higher among minoritites than nonminorities." In Minority Secondary Education in New York City, Aspira of New York revealed an 80% dropout rate for Hispanic students. As a result, there has been an increased focus upon the disproportionate number of language minority students in our schools. They account for 36.23% of all children between the ages of 5 and 17 in New York City as reported by the State Education Department in their 1985 analysis, Diversity in New York State . In Community School Districts 24 and 30 in Queens, the number exceeds 7,500 pupils

in grades 1 through 9. These students represent a high risk population due to their limited English proficiency, cultural isolation and low socioeconomic status. These factors often result in pressure to drop out of school and find a job.

The desire to solve these problems was the motivating factor in establishing The International High School on the campus of LaGuardia Community College in Queens, New York, in 1985. Janet E. Lieberman, founder of the Middle College High School, an alternative high school already located on the LaGuardia Campus, reasoned that the success of Middle College in retaining potential dropouts and in attracting them to higher education could be applied to a new group of poorly serviced students, those with limited English proficiency. The dropout figures for the overall school population were unacceptable; those for LEP students were worse. There was a demonstrable need to try a new approach built on the successful reform embodied by a high school on a college campus. The new structure would recognize the need to learn English as central to success, appreciate the tremendous resource represented by students' native languages and cultures, understand the adolescents' need to belong, and emphasize the importance of acquiring the skills necessary for higher education.

Planning began a year before the scheduled opening. A committee led by Janet Lieberman and Cecilia Cullen, Principal of the Middle College High School, and enriched by the experience

of Eric Nadelstern, then Assistant Program Manager of High School Bilingual/ESL Programs, designed a program for students who were characterized as "high risk". Their recent arrival in the United States, their limited English proficiency and the inability to adapt the regular high school structure so that LEP students could learn effectively, made them potential dropouts. Criteria for admission to the high school on the college campus were:

(1) Less than four years residence in the United States;

(2) A score below the 21st percentile on the English version of the Language Assessment Battery; and,

(3) Classified by a referring guidance counselor or the Board of Education's Office of High School Admissions as a student who requires an alternative educational environment to reach full potential.

The planning team included outstanding educators as consultants: Dr. Carmen Ortiz, formerly of the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education; Dr. Julia Wu, Professor of Special Education at Hunter College; Dr, Rosemary Salomone, Professor of Law and Education, Harvard School of Education; Dr, Geraldine Grant, Professor of Anthropology, LaGuardia Community College; Ms. Rebecca Straus, former Director of the Dalton School and Director ofthe Bank Street School for Children; and, Dr. Elizabeth Coleman, President of Bennington College. These scholars contributed their expertise in the development of a plan to educate LEP students in grades 10 to 12. The programmatic

features were: an integrated approach which emphasized learning English and content through the use of second language acquisition methods, collaborative learning strategies in subject area classes, and off-site career education internships.

On April 11, 1985, a "Practitioner's Conference" of nationally recognized experts in teaching English to speakers of other languages and bilingual education was convened at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), to review and react to the plan for The International High School. Consultants included: Ms. Lydia Stack, Newcomer High School in San Francisco; Dr. Collette Daiute, Harvard University Graduate School of Education; Dr. James Cummins, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; and, Dr. Stephen Krashen, Department of Linguistics, University of Southern California. They reviewed the proposed design and deemed it the best approach for the 80's.

OVERVIEW

The International High School is located on the campus of LaGuardia Community College. Students have full use of all college facilities: gyms, labs, libraries, recreation areas, cafeterias, and computers. Although the program is a regular 5 1/2 hour day, teenagers can stay on the college campus until 10 o'clock at night. The setting is clean, safe and exciting. The high school population has roughly the same distribution as the

college. Students often have the opportunity to speak their native languages with college students who have become bilingual. They are surrounded by positive models with whom they can identify.

The choice of site and planning team for the new International High School recognized the success of the Middle College High School, opened on the LaGuardia campus in 1974, and recognized nationally as one of the most successful programs for at-risk students. The Ford Foundation has chosen Middle College High School as a model for national replication and provided funding for this purpose. Factors which make Middle College High School successful are the small size, the location, intensive counseling support and an extensive career education program. All these features became integral parts of The International High School, and twelve years of experience with a high school-college collaborative provided a solid foundation for the new school.

Special Features

Some other special features of The International High School are:

-The faculty members of The International High School utilize English as a Second Language (ESL) techniques as a means of reinforcing English language development and facilitating the acquisition of content across the curriculum.

-Extended-day study opportunities are provided. Students

participate in small group tutorials designed to promote communicative competence in English, reinforce native language skills, extend content area studies and explore career education alternatives. Extracurricular teams and clubs, as well as an ESL class for parents, are also offered.

-All graduates are guaranteed admission to LaGuardia Community College. As they acquire greater proficiency in English, International High School students may take courses at the College for both high school and college credit.

-Courses designed for International High School students taught by college instructors are available in a variety of areas.

-An Integrated Learning Center (ILC) provides individualized and small group experiential learning opportunities to facilitate English language acquisition.

-All students participate in a mandatory out-of-school internship program which provides them with unpaid, credit-bearing, part-time work experiences for one-third of each school year as a means of fulfilling high school graduation requirements. Students investigate careers in business technology, human services and liberal arts and sciences, while further developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English and their native languages within the context of the workplace.

Student Profile

The International High School opened in 1985 with 56 students enrolled. During the year, 15 more joined the program. In 1986-87, 114 students were added, increasing the enrollment to 185 students. In the 1987-88 year, registration increased to 310. The student body that year represented 37 countries, spoke 32 languages other than English, and ranged in age from 14-21 years old. Most students entered from junior high school, chosen by their guidance counselors at the end of the ninth grade. These young men and women represent a broad spectrum of English language proficiencies, native language abilities, literacy skills and prior academic preparation. In 1988-89, with the addition of a 9th grade class, the register now exceeds 400 students and the school has reached full enrollment.

Staff Profile

All full-time staff are licensed and certified Board of Education personnel. In 1985, the faculty consisted of 7 teachers, 2 guidance counselors, 2 educational assistants, 1 family worker and 1 school secretary. The Principal of Middle College High School, Cecilia Cullen, and the Assistant Principal-in-Charge of The International High School, Eric Nadelstern, jointly selected the faculty. Hiring decisions in subsequent years have been made by the Assistant Principal-in Charge from a list of candidates recommended by a Faculty Personnel Committee. The committee applied the following

criteria: knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical expertise, evidence of professional involvement, cross-cultural sensitivity, and proficiency in a language other than English. For the 1988-89 school year, there is a full complement of 38 staff members, including: the Assistant Principal-in-Charge, 2 administrative assistants, 3 guidance counselors, 24 teachers (4 ESL specialists and 20 content area teachers), 4 paraprofessionals, 2 family workers, and 2 school secretaries. The present staff has fluency in 13 languages other than English, including: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Farsi, French, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Russian, Greek, Dutch, Italian, Pashto and Yiddish.

Basic Educational Principles

The mission of The International High School is to enable each student to develop the linguistic, cognitive and cultural skills necessary for success in high school, college and beyond. The educational principles that underlie the design of the school and permeate its atmosphere are:

- Adolescent LEP students need to understand, speak, read, write and communicate English fluently to realize their full potential in an English speaking society.
- Fluency in a language other than English is not a handicap, but an advantage.
- Students learn language skills in context and embedded in a subject area.
- Adolescents learn best from each other.

-Career education is an significant motivational factor for adolescent learners.

-Expectations of high achievement standards combined with intensive support and guidance result in the most successful educational programs.

-A high school-college collaborative can enhance the development of an educational program by offering enriched opportunities for individual advancement of learning.

-Learning centers, career internship sites, field trips and multiple learning opportunities add to the classroom and increase both language acquisition and content area mastery.

-The most effective instruction takes place when teachers participate actively in the school decision-making process.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

As defined by the regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education, students at The International High School must complete the same requirements for graduation as all other high school students in New York State. These required courses include: 4 years of English study; 4 years of social studies; 2 years of mathematics; 2 years of science; 1 year of foreign language; and art, music and physical education. Students are also required to successfully complete one more year in English or math or science, and to pass statewide Regents

Competency Tests (RCTs) in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Global Studies, American Studies and Science. Additionally, all students enrolled at The International High School must complete a 3-year sequence in career and occupational education through a combination of in-school coursework and out-of-school internships. Students may take college courses at LaGuardia which can substitute for these requirements, or which can be taken on an elective basis in addition to the requirements for a high school diploma.

The student body of The International High School is as varied as the student body in any other school when it comes to individual abilities and interests, but the common factor is the need to learn English. Therefore, all classes in all subject areas are taught with an emphasis on the acquisition and practice of English language skills. In addition to the language activities in subject study and English classes, an Integrated Learning Center provides individualized and small group experiential learning opportunities to facilitate English language acquisition.

Designed to fit the needs of its special population, the curriculum of The International High School begins with language learning. At The International High School, language skills develop from meaningful content, and students acquire English in all of their subject area classes. Collaborative learning strategies encourage students at different levels of English

language acquisition and academic preparation to rely of themselves and each other, as they explore their subject area studies in small groups. They are encouraged and taught to use their native language skills to support their learning of English, and to regard their own cultural backgrounds and those of other students as a classroom resource, serving to enhance and enrich their learning experience.

At the core of the instructional program is an Integrated Learning Center, staffed by trained and qualified ESL teachers. ILC courses engage students in small-group interdisciplinary learning activities designed to facilitate English language acquisition, supplement content area studies, and promote personal growth as members of the school community. In these classes, language is an outgrowth of the content and experiences provided, where linguistic, cognitive and cultural skills are derived from subject matter exploration.

Building on the specialty of LaGuardia College and the Middle College High School, The International High School curriculum features career education; teenagers go out to work for half of each school day, one trimester per year. They work without pay, generally in social service settings, and they receive academic credit for the program. These off-site career internship placements provide students with experiential educational oportunities to investigate career interests, reinforce their English language skills, and further develop

their native language proficiencies within the context of the workplace. In the psychological terms of Piaget, the programmatic foundation, learning through career education, is part of the process of adaptation that helps students acquire cognitive skills through the fusion of school learning and work experience.

COLLABORATION

In addition to being located on a college campus, The International High School benefits from a close collaboration between the New York City Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education. Funding follows students; funds from city, state and federal sources which would pay for hiring teachers and purchasing texts and other eductional materials are supplemented by contributions from the Board of Higher Education, through LaGuardia Community College. The college provides space, the use of specialized facilities such as laboratories, studios, computer labs, and libraries, the expertise and contacts of its staff, prestige, and some funding for services such as duplication, printing, mailing, security and hiring adjunct instructors. The Board of Education pays for the teachers, administrators, most supplies, textbooks, and all the other things which would normally be provided for students in regular high schools.

In addition to the financial and administrative

collaboration which makes The International High school possible, collaborative principles are also applied to school governance and to methods of instruction. Staff committees interview applicants for jobs, and make hiring recommendations to the Assistant Principal-in-Charge; a curriculum committee evaluates and makes recommendations for staff development and curriculum revision. A Student Government has real power to influence administrative decisions and school policy; teachers use collaborative learning techniques rather than the traditional mixture of recitations, lecture-demonstrations and socialized lessons.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The International High School, taking advantage of its college setting and the experience of an already-established high school-college collaborative school on the campus, was able to integrate high school and college procedures into a model of school governance that combines some of the best features of each institution. The working model is significantly different from the hierarchical and authoritarian model inherent in the regular high school. College faculty are accustomed to an autonomy and a sense of professionalism which is inherent in the conditions of their working lives: no time clocks, adequate resources for teaching and research, freedom from institutional

clerical tasks, elimination of non-professional staff functions (i.e. assisting in building security), collaborative decision-making, access to supervisors on a peer level, peer review and evaluation.

Assistant Principal-in-Charge Eric Nadelstern appreciated the unique opportunity inherent in this model and began to offer his staff the chance to forge a new self-image based on a new teacher-administration relationship. Underlying the changes was the goal of demonstrating that shared leadership in a high school can foster the growth of professionalism in the faculty.

With a faculty who had formerly taught at other high schools and were accustomed to traditional roles and organization, Nadelstern suggested new responsibilities and activities to give the staff more decision-making opportunities. The first initiative was establishing a faculty personnel committee empowered to recruit and interview new applicants for faculty positions. The committee did not hire by itself, but screened and recommended to Eric Nadelstern, who then interviewed the applicants the committee had selected. The impact of this committee was powerful, as faculty began to look at the total need of the school, to categorize the advantages and disadvantages of the setting, to analyze the backgrounds, personalities and experiences which made successful teachers. Members of this committee found themselves able to communicate very directly with applicants for jobs, and to identify the

significant components of working in The International High School. When staffing is a shared activity, the entire faculty accepts a responsibility for orienting and supporting new faculty. Having chosen the new staff, they are committed to helping them succeed. Three years' experience with this process gives faculty a sense of collaboration and participation in the organization and management of the school which provides the best of the "advice and consent" strategy.

A second major source of empowerment is curriculum development. In the International High School, because of the needs of the students, adaptations of the regular instructional model were vital to ensure mastery. As a result of the energy generated by the faculty training, the staff undertook the curriculum revision with enthusiasm and inspiration under the leadership of a faculty curriculum committee. The result is an unusual group of instructional strategies (described in detail in The International Approach, published in 1987) which have yielded the exceptional achievement scores International High School students have demonstrated in their three years of attendance.

Corollary to the process of empowerment is the accepted expectation of ongoing faculty development. The message here reinforces professionalization: teachers must continue to learn and improve, to enhance their academic skills and to be actively involved in their own intellectual growth and that of their students. The continuing faculty development provides an

opportunity to measure all ideas against the structure of the educational philosophy which permeates the school.

The third area of faculty involvement in the school governance and decision-making structure is peer review and evaluation. The plan, developed by a faculty professional development committee, calls for untenured teachers and counselors to be observed for a minimum of two evaluations each year by a supervisor, evaluated no less than twice each year by their colleagues, and to submit at least two self-evaluation reports on an annual basis. For tenured faculty, the minimum annual requirement is for one supervisory evaluation, one peer evaluation, and one self-evaluation report. This material, along with the results of student course and teacher evaluation questionnaires, are reviewed by the faculty committee for the purpose of submitting recommendations to the Assistant Principal-in-Charge for continuation of service, completion of probation and the granting of tenure, and annual performance ratings.

Of even greater significance than meeting evaluation requirements, the peer observation and review process has served to promote professional growth and development by:

-Exposing faculty to a wide range of methods and techniques.

-Enabling them to develop a philosophy of what constitutes effective teaching and counseling.

-Encouraging them to view their own behaviors differently in

light of the professional practices of others.

-Promoting experimentation with new approaches and strategies observed.

-Facilitating the sharing of ideas and insights with their colleagues.

-Institutionalizing the process of continuous self-evaluation.

As a result, teaching has become a matter of public focus at The International High School, rather than a private concern discussed only between an individual teacher and supervisor behind closed doors.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

During the first three years, there were impressive results in the areas of student retention and academic achievement. Annual average daily attendance rates have exceeded 90% in comparison to an average daily attendance rate for New York City's public high schools of 78% in that period. The dropout rate over three years has been 3.9%, in contrast to a citywide high school dropout figure of nearly 30%. The passing percentage for all classes taken was 80%, with approximately 150 students enrolled in college classes each year.

Of the first incoming class, 58 of 60 senior class students successfully completed all RCT requirements by the end of their

third year, with a 100% pass rate in writing, a 98.3% pass rate in reading, and a 98.3% pass rate in mathematics. As a consequence, 54 of these students received their high school diplomas in June 1988, resulting in a 90% graduation rate. All graduates have received college acceptance, with 85% planning to attend four-year institutions of higher education, and the remaining 15% planning to enroll in two-year colleges. Eighty per cent plan to attend CUNY, 15% will attend the State University of New York (SUNY), and 5% will continue their studies at private colleges.

These student achievement records after three years of study at The International High School attest to the school's level of success in realizing its mission. As a result of these achievements, the school has received a gold medal awarded by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) in a national search for institutions "demonstrating the greatest effectiveness with a new or improved partnership between a high school and a college." Additionally, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has conferred "Center of Excellence" status on The International High School in their nationwide search for outstanding educational efforts in the teaching of English communication arts. Furthermore, Public/Private Ventures, the formal evaluators for the City University of New York, have recommended that The International High School approach to teaching English through content area study should be replicated

in junior and senior high schools throughout New York City.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REPLICATION

With a strong commitment to collaboration on the part of host colleges and boards of education, sufficient planning time, careful identification of the student population to be served, and a clearly defined mission and philosophy, the collaborative program design developed at The International High School can and should be replicated to serve the needs of multilingual/ multicultural LEP student populations. Additionally, secondary schools serving LEP students could productively form interdisciplinary faculty teams for the purpose of identifying and implementing those aspects of the instructional approach that can be effectively replicated at their institutions.

The International High School at LaGuardia Community College has demonstrated the benefits that can be realized by changing the structure of high schools. Collaboration at the institutional level, between high school and college faculties, and among students in the classroom has enhanced resources and increased productivity. Shared leadership has proven a powerful catalyst in promoting educational reform. Articulation of the high school and college curriculum, stressing an integrated approach to language development through content area studies, has led to higher rates of student attendance, retention, achievement, graduation and

college acceptance.

Given the freedom to redefine the way in which school is conducted, and the resources required to accomplish this task, the faculty at The International High School has created a thriving and vibrant learning community. The product of these innovative initiatives, as well as the process by which it has been achieved, holds promise for those committed to school reform. We, at LaGuardia, look forward to learning from such efforts.

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